# Algoma Headwaters Signature Site

## Management Options

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Ontario

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July 2003

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## Approval Statement

We are pleased to approve the management options document for the development of the *Algoma Headwaters Signature Site Strategy*.

The purpose of this management options document is to:

- *present to the public the proposed policy direction for the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site, as specified in the policies and related directives of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Ontario Parks and Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy (1999)*
- *outline management topics and options, including zoning within the signature site*
- *seek and reflect public input on the management topics and options.*

Once the review of public consultation is complete, the planning team will review and summarize the comments received. Based on this information, a preliminary signature site strategy will be prepared and will include preferred management approaches.

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## Table of Contents

Approval Statement ..... i

1.0 Introduction ..... 1

1.1 Resource Characteristics ..... 1

2.0 Purpose of this Document ..... 2

3.0 Protected Area Policy Context ..... 5

3.1 A Strategy to Integrate Protected Areas ..... 5

3.1.1 Conservation Reserve ..... 5

3.1.2 Provincial Parks ..... 6

3.2 Protected Area Policy ..... 7

3.2.1 Signature Site Goal ..... 7

3.2.2 Signature Site Objectives ..... 7

4.0 Management Topics ..... 8

4.1 Access ..... 8

4.2 Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage Values ..... 8

4.3 Recreation ..... 9

4.4 Commercial Tourism ..... 9

4.5 Mechanized / Motorized Travel ..... 9

4.6 Fisheries Management ..... 10

4.7 Hunting ..... 10

4.8 Winter Use ..... 10

4.9 Rehabilitation of Sites ..... 10

4.10 Utilities ..... 10

4.11 Implementation ..... 10

4.12 Research ..... 11

5.0 Signature Site Management Options and Zoning ..... 11

5.1.1 Natural Environment (NE) Zones ..... 13

5.1.2 Conservation Reserve ..... 14
5.1.3 Access (A) and Development (D) Zones ..... 15
5.1.4 Nature Reserve (NR) Zones ..... 16
5.1.5 Wilderness (W) Zones ..... 17
5.1.6 Historical (H) Zones ..... 18
6.0 Management Policies ..... 18
6.1 Aboriginal or Treaty Rights ..... 19
6.2 Cultural Resource Protection ..... 19
6.3 Access / Mechanized Travel ..... 19
6.4 Heritage Education ..... 19
6.5 Adjacent Land Use Management ..... 20
6.6 Hunting and Trapping ..... 20
6.7 Fisheries Management ..... 20
6.8 Forest Operations ..... 21
6.9 Mining Claims / Mineral Exploration ..... 21
6.10 Fire Management ..... 21
6.11 Partnerships ..... 22
7.0 Summary ..... 23

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Regional Context ..... 24
Figure 2: Protected Areas Designation: Algoma Headwaters Signature Site ..... 25
Figure 3: Zoning Option 1 ..... 26
Figure 4: Zoning Option 2 ..... 27

## 1.0 Introduction

The Algoma Headwaters Signature Site is an exciting new protected area occupying almost 60,000 hectares and including three new provincial parks and an existing conservation reserve. They are:

- Algoma Headwaters Provincial Park (Natural Environment Class)
- Goulais River and Aubinadong-Nushatogaini Rivers Provincial Parks (Waterway Class)
- Ranger North Conservation Reserve

The site is located approximately 90 km northeast of Sault Ste. Marie and 50 km south of Chapleau (Figure 1) and is one of nine featured areas identified in *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (1999). The featured areas each have great potential for resource development, tourism and recreational activities, and share a common theme – significant natural and cultural features that require extensive planning, management and promotion. Algoma Headwaters contains old growth forests and extensive wilderness areas where tourists enjoy a wide variety of recreation activities including hiking, canoeing, hunting, fishing, wilderness camping and wildlife viewing. There are few areas in the southern most section of the signature site accessible by road. The central and northern sections are mostly remote and undeveloped, and are accessible only by air or canoe.

### 1.1 Resource Characteristics

Algoma Headwaters Signature Site is situated in one of Ontario's most scenic areas made up of rolling hills, forests and wetlands, with a network of connecting waterways (Figure 2). There are approximately 175 lakes and over 200 rivers and streams. The site's significant natural, cultural and recreational features include a wide variety of plants and animals including species at risk, old growth red and white pine forests, as well as traditional Aboriginal trails, campsites and values.

The Algoma region contains some of the largest remaining stands of mixed pine and hardwood old growth forests in Ontario, some of which are captured within Algoma Headwaters. Some of the largest and oldest stands of white and red pine in Ontario - up to 350 years old and 15 stories high – are prevalent around Megisan, Gord, Prairie Grass and Dyson lakes. Ranger North Conservation Reserve was established primarily to protect these significant ecosystems.

The Algoma forests are renowned for their beautiful fall foliage, and are an increasingly popular destination with tourists for sightseeing and wildlife viewing. Along with deciduous forests of sugar maple and yellow birch, Algoma Headwaters is also home to species seen more often in boreal forests, such as black spruce and jack pine. From south to north, the forest changes from mostly deciduous to coniferous. Bog and fen wetlands are common and covered with

seasonally blooming cranberries, orchids and Labrador tea.

The site is also characterized by glacial surface deposits on top of Precambrian rock. The site is located entirely within the Western Abitibi sub-province of the Superior Province - ancient structural subdivisions of the Canadian Shield. Surface deposits of ground moraine were left by continental glacial ice of the late Wisconsinan age when it retreated from the area about 10,000 years ago. The most prominent features are: segments of the regionally significant Cartier moraine; delta valley "train" deposits in the West Aubinadong River; and an ice contact delta on the Goulais River (a natural heritage feature known as the Searchmont Delta). The latter two are considered to be provincially significant features.

## 2.0 Purpose of this Document

A strategy will be prepared for the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site to guide the protection and management of resources, visitor use, and overall development within the protected areas. The strategy will also encourage opportunities for partnerships and business agreements with local communities, stakeholders and First Nations. The strategy will be a dynamic plan for the next 20 years, and will be designed to meet the policy and regulatory requirements for conservation reserve and provincial park planning.

A **statement of conservation interest**[1] was prepared in 1999 to provide management direction for the Ranger North Conservation Reserve. An **interim management statement**[2] was developed in 2001 to provide interim direction for the entire signature site until the specialized strategy could be completed. The approved strategy will contain a park management plan for each of the three new provincial parks and directions for managing resources within the conservation reserve.

During the initial stage of development, a **terms of reference** was completed to guide this planning process. In the second stage, a **background information report** was prepared to summarize what is known about the protected areas' environments, natural heritage features, and uses.

The **management options** document is the third stage of this process. Its purpose is to:

- *present to the public the proposed policy direction for the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site, as specified in the policies and related directives of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Ontario Parks and Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*

[1] Statement of Conservation Interest is the custodial level of direction for a conservation reserve, to identify the purpose for which a conservation reserve has been proposed, and outlines the Ministry's management intent.

[2] An Interim Management Statement is a custodial level of direction intended to guide the management of the signature site until such time as a signature site strategy is prepared.

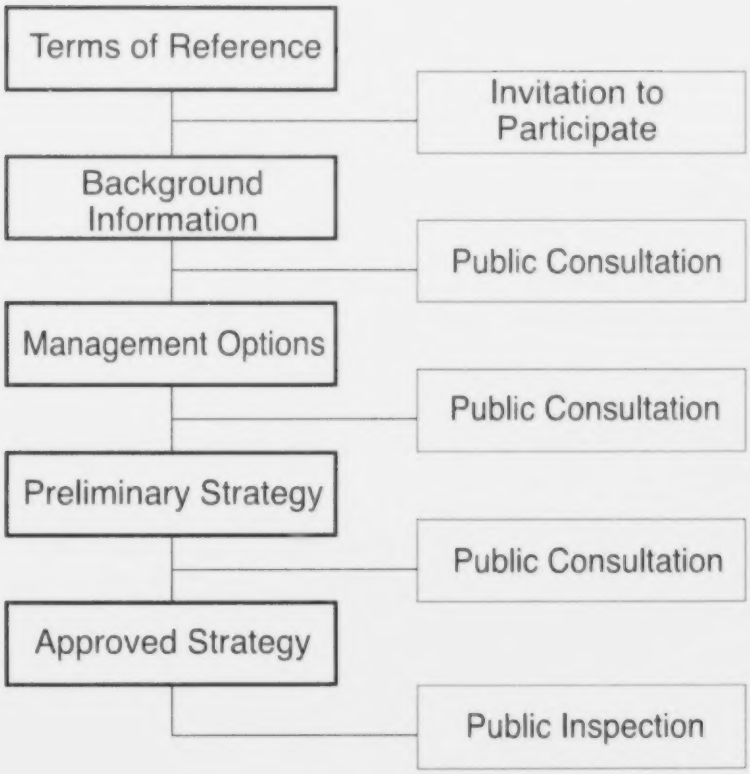
- *outline management topics and options, including zoning within the signature site*
- *seek and reflect public input on the management topics and options*

Once the review of public consultation is complete, the planning team will review and summarize the comments received. Based on this information, a preliminary strategy will be prepared and will include preferred management approaches.

Further public consultation will take place after the release of the preliminary strategy, and comments will be considered in the preparation of a final recommended strategy.

Algoma Headwaters Signature Site
General Planning Process

(For a more detailed version, refer to Terms of Reference - Planning Schedule, page 23).



During the planning process for the signature site, Ontario Parks/MNR must consider all current information, public opinion, and provincial policy in their decisions, while at the same time remaining true to the vision for the signature site which states:

*"The Algoma Headwaters Signature Site will provide long-term protection for the area's natural and cultural landscapes, while providing present and future generations with high quality, year-round recreational opportunities. In a remote, yet accessible setting, the signature site provides the opportunity to experience old growth forests, scenic waterways, and Aboriginal heritage values. The site is dedicated in perpetuity to the people of Ontario and others for their enjoyment, education and benefit."*

## 3.0 Protected Area Policy Context

The Algoma Headwaters Signature Site Strategy will provide directions for managing the resources in the protected areas and will be based on Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies (1992), MNR Conservation Reserves Policy (PL 3.03.05), the direction outlined in *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (1999), and additional policy clarification statements.

Resource management planning for the conservation reserve and management planning for the parks in Algoma Headwaters will be integrated into the signature site strategy. The foundation for the strategy is derived from policies in the 'Ranger North Conservation Reserve Statement of Conservation Interest' and the 'Algoma Headwaters Signature Site Interim Management Statement.'

The approved strategy will set the overall management direction for Algoma Headwaters. Subsequently implementation plans will be developed to provide further detailed guidance for the protection, management and operation of the signature site. This may include implementation plans for operations, vegetation, fish and wildlife, and fire.

### 3.1 A Strategy to Integrate Protected Areas

MNR has established a number of protected areas throughout Ontario known as provincial parks and conservation reserves. Ranger North Conservation Reserve and the provincial parks within Algoma Headwaters provide protection for natural heritage features on public lands while permitting most traditional land uses to continue. Conservation reserves complement provincial parks by protecting representative natural and special areas, while continuing to allow for most traditional uses.

#### 3.1.1 Conservation Reserve

The Ranger North Conservation Reserve is an integral part of Algoma Headwaters Signature Site. Regulated in 1997 under the *Public Lands Act*, it includes 7,032 hectares of land and water. It is important to note that the remoteness of and

limited access within the reserve will continue to be protected.

Ranger North Conservation Reserve was identified through a life science assessment process and was withdrawn from forest allocations and staking to ensure protection of all its natural and cultural heritage resources. The *Ontario Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* reaffirmed that Ranger North would continue to be protected as a conservation reserve. Initial direction for its management was provided within the Statement of Conservation Interest.

Resource management planning for the conservation reserve is part of the planning process for the strategy. It will include recording background information and preliminary ideas on resource management. The preferred approach will be approved to protect the integrity of Ranger North's natural and recreational features.

Most recreational and non-commercial activities that have traditionally been permitted may continue provided they pose no threat to the natural ecosystems or features in the conservation reserve. Mechanized travel, including snowmobiles and all terrain vehicles (ATVs), and non-motorized travel, such as cycling and horseback riding, are permitted only on existing recognized and authorized roads. (Detailed policies for conservation reserves are outlined in *Conservation Reserves Policy and Procedures, MNR, 1997.*)

### 3.1.2 Provincial Parks

Provincial parks are regulated under and governed by the *Provincial Parks Act.* As such, revenue will be required to support the operations of these parks. Hence, once the provincial parks within the signature site are operational, fees will be collected for camping, day use, and aircraft landings.

Park classification organizes Ontario's provincial parks into broad categories, each of which has particular purposes and characteristics, as well as distinct planning, management, and visitor policies. The six park classifications are:

- wilderness
- nature reserve
- natural environment
- recreation
- waterway and
- historical.

In addition, zoning further determines uses within parks (see also Zoning, Section 5.0).

Park classification for each park and zoning within parks recognizes that a diverse park system provides a wide variety of experiences in a number of different environments and ensures that diversity, from strictly protected natural areas to well developed recreational facilities, is maintained in the system.

The largest component of the signature site is Algoma Headwaters Provincial Park, which covers 42,745

hectares. It is classified as a natural environment park owing to its remote yet accessible backcountry/wilderness landscapes. Consistent with provincial parks policy, natural environment parks are described as those which *"incorporate outstanding recreational landscapes with representative natural features and historical resources to provide high quality recreational and educational experiences."*

The Goulais River Provincial Park (5,084 ha) and the Aubinadong-Nushatogaini Rivers Provincial Park (4,928 ha) are both classified as waterway parks and have extensive river and lake systems. Waterway parks are described in provincial parks policy as those which *"incorporate outstanding recreational water routes with representative natural features and historical resources to provide high quality recreational and educational experiences."*

Mechanized travel including vehicles, snowmobiles, ATVs, bicycles, etc., will be permitted to continue within provincial parks on existing authorized trails, subject to prescriptions determined through planning. Snowmobiles may be permitted on existing authorized roads in natural environment, development and access zones. ATVs may be permitted on existing authorized roads and trails in development and access zones. Non-motorized travel, such as cycling and horseback riding, is permitted only on existing authorized roads and trails.

### 3.2 Protected Area Policy

The three provincial parks of Algoma Headwaters Signature Site are governed by directions in the *Ontario Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, additional clarification documents as well as provincial park policies, procedures and bulletins. Combined with conservation reserve policies and procedures which guide management of the Ranger North Conservation Reserve, they establish the framework for planning and management of the signature site.

#### 3.2.1 Signature Site Goal

The goal for the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site is:

*To protect provincially significant natural and cultural landscapes, while providing a variety of outdoor recreation activities as well as enhanced related tourism opportunities.*

#### 3.2.2 Signature Site Objectives

Provincial parks and conservation reserve objectives will be merged through the signature site strategy:

*Protection: To protect provincially significant elements of the natural and cultural landscape of Ontario.*

*Heritage Appreciation: To provide opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the natural and cultural outdoor heritage of Ontario.*

*Recreation: To provide outdoor recreation opportunities ranging from high-intensity day-use to low-intensity wilderness experiences.*

*Tourism: To provide Ontario's residents and visitors with opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive regions of the province.*

*Financial Self-reliance: To protect, plan, develop and manage Ontario's system of protected areas on an ecologically sustainable basis while improving financial self-reliance.*

## 4.0 Management Topics

"Your chance to comment"

Planning, management and operations topics will be addressed during the process to prepare the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site Strategy.

Management options that deal with each topic are posed as questions in the following section. These questions were used to develop some alternative approaches to management and zoning for the signature site.

You may have other questions and approaches to deal with management and zoning. Please add them when filling out the comment sheet and/or in your response to the questions below.

### 4.1 Access

- Should any new access points be established? If so, where?
- Should some or all of the access points be maintained, or should some or all be restricted or closed?
- Should some or all of the existing access locations "outside" the signature site continue to allow access "into" the signature site?
- Should entry to protected areas be by means of self-registration or should registration be managed by staff with the possible development of partnerships?
- Should access to certain lakes be restricted to protect fisheries and/or back country/wilderness features of the area?
- How could an access strategy be prepared which will accommodate all users?

*(* Note that the use of snowmobiles and ATVs within the signature site is only permitted on authorized trails, and as permitted by zoning designations.)*

### 4.2 Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage Values

- What significant natural and cultural heritage features are you aware of within the site?
- Do you know of other features/resources that are not identified in this document and that should be identified?
- Can you think of ways to manage existing features other than those being considered?

### 4.3 Recreation

- What level of recreation/tourism should the site support?
- What priorities should be identified for recreation management planning for the site (e.g. car-camping, access point enhancement, canoe route development)?
- How should car camping be managed? Should it continue to occur at numerous small sites, or be concentrated at more developed campgrounds at one or two larger sites such as Ragged and/or Friendly Lakes?
- Should car camping be restricted in certain areas of the site, for example, to occur only at certain access points?
- Should there be seasonally leased campsites within the signature site?
- Should interior campsites (i.e. "boat-in" and/or "canoe-in" sites) be expanded and/or enhanced? If so, where?
- Should simple privies (i.e. "thunder boxes") be installed at interior campsites?
- Should "hike-in" campsites be developed, for example, on Moon, Simms, Eileen, and Coppens Lakes?
- Should more hiking ("non-mechanized") trails be developed?
- Should more mechanized trails be developed?
- Should a hiking trail network be developed to complement existing limited hiking paths?
- Should sites where there has been unplanned vehicle camping be closed and/or rehabilitated?
- Should vehicle and snowmobile access be restricted to certain lakes to maintain fisheries and wilderness character?
- Should motorboat and/or motor size (horsepower) restrictions be introduced in select areas of the signature site?
- Should the site be operational in winter?

### 4.4 Commercial Tourism

- Should the status quo be maintained with respect to the amount of commercial tourism?
- Should new commercial tourism infrastructure and / or services be permitted? Specifically, a proposal has been submitted for four land use permits on Nokomis, Ninegee and Firetrail lakes, as well as a location in northwest Carton Township. The proposal is for 6-to-8 person cabins on each of three of the lakes, and a 12-person lodge on the remaining lake. Should this proposal be approved?
- Should existing commercial tourism facilities be permitted to expand to accommodate greater numbers of tourists?

### 4.5 Mechanized / Motorized Travel

- Should there be restrictions placed on motorized travel in some areas or for some types of travel within the site?
- Should new or enhanced access be permitted within the signature site?

- How should snow machine use be managed? Should snow machine trails on water be authorized trails? (e.g. Saymo – Torrance – Megisan Lake route)
- Should there be ATV and/or snowmobile restrictions in some areas of the site?
- Are there some lakes where a motor boat ban or a restriction to canoeing only, would be appropriate to encourage back country/wilderness experiences?
- What restrictions, if any, should there be on aircraft landings?

### 4.6 Fisheries Management

In accordance with the *Ontario Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, sport fishing is permitted except in specific sanctuaries subject to the regulations under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

- Should new fish sanctuaries be designated within the site?
- Is there a need for special regulations (restricted limits, slot sizes, special seasons) to protect fish and fisheries?
- Are there any concerns about aquatic habitat within the site?
- Should fish stocking – a "put and take" fishery be introduced?
- Should the use of baitfish continue to be restricted in certain lakes?
- Should live baitfish be restricted in the entire signature site?

### 4.7 Hunting

Hunting will continue throughout the signature site, except where options are being considered for nature reserve (NR) zones.

- Should hunting opportunities be enhanced, or alternately, be modified within the site?

### 4.8 Winter Use

- Is there a need for winter restrictions to protect fishery resources based on biological and scientific data or research?
- Should winter fishing opportunities be enhanced or expanded based on similar research and data?
- Are formal agreements with snowmobile clubs necessary to have approved trail systems within the signature site?

### 4.9 Rehabilitation of Sites

- How can "wayside" and primary aggregate pits be managed for the benefit of both the signature site and commercial users?
- Is there a need for the existing waste disposal site at Ragged Lake?

### 4.10 Utilities

- How should hydro corridors that traverse the site be managed?

### 4.11 Implementation

- What ideas should be a priority for implementation of the strategy (e.g., access management, fee collection, visitor education, infrastructure development, etc.)?

- Should there be a work centre for administration within the signature site? If so, at which location?
- Should fees be collected for cost recovery, and if so how should they be collected?
- What level of operations and management would you like to see for the site? (e.g. season start and end dates, fees, seasonal staff and work crews on site)
- Should an interpretive/education program be introduced?
- Once approved, are there components of the strategy that could be implemented by partnership(s) between Ontario Parks/MNR and the private and/or not-for-profit sector? If so, what types of partnerships should be pursued?

### 4.12 Research

- What research should be carried out within the signature site?

## 5.0 Signature Site Management Options and Zoning

Prior to signature site planning, an Interim Management Statement was prepared for the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site (OMNR 2001). It included policy direction from *Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies* (1992), the *Statement of Conservation Interest* for Ranger North, and *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy.*

**Zoning:** The concept of zoning during signature site planning recognizes that each protected area, whether a conservation reserve or provincial park, possesses a unique combination of resources, features and potential experiences. These are the reasons that protected areas and classifications were established.

Provincial parks are zoned on the basis of the *Provincial Park Act.* However, zoning within conservation reserves is not provided for under the *Public Lands Act.* Enhanced protection of natural values within these areas would therefore be achieved through other means.

Zoning allocates lands and waters based on their protection requirements and potential for recreation. Management options consider six different types of zones within the provincial parks: wilderness, natural environment, nature reserve, historical, development, and access.

The general characteristics of each zone are as follows:

Wilderness zones (W) include wilderness areas with the appropriate size and integrity to protect significant natural and cultural features and are suitable for wilderness experiences with an absolute minimum of development.

Natural Environment zones (NE) include natural, cultural and aesthetic surroundings in which a minimum of development is required to support low-intensity recreational activities.

Nature Reserve zones (NR) include any significant earth and life science features which need a different type of management from that in adjacent zones and an absolute minimum of development.

Historical zones (H) include any significant historical resources which require management that is different from that in adjacent zones, but will support minimum development to allow for visitor exploration and appreciation as well as scientific research.

Access zones (A) serve as staging areas where a minimum of facilities are provided for the use of nature reserve (NR) or wilderness (W) zones, and less developed natural environment (NE) and historical (H) zones.

Development zones (D) provide the main access to the park, facilities and services for a wide range of day-use and camping activities. This type of zone will be a relatively small portion of individual areas.

### Zoning Options and How They Work

Zoning, as part of planning for a protected area, allows for certain distinct portions of the site to be managed and protected differently from other areas.

This is based on the reality that visitors do not use all resources in the same way and that all activities are not carried out everywhere, nor should they be. For example, an area with provincially significant vegetation may be zoned as a nature reserve - a designation which restricts uses to very low-impact visiting.

Public consultation, as well as review of policy and assessments, is important to determine appropriate zoning designations. For example: within the site, there is a long-established road that leads to a lake with an access point where a campsite has been established by previous visitors. People use this access point in a variety of ways. Some camp at the access point, others fish for a day. Still others use the access point as a boat launch to travel to a campsite further along the lake. It is also used to portage into an adjacent lake to camp.

To determine the appropriate zoning for this lake and the existing access point, various aspects of potential use and management are considered. If after internal MNR review and pubic consultation, it is determined that the lake should be kept predominantly in a natural state, then the appropriate designation for the entire lake, including the access point, is natural environment. This would mean that while traditional uses (camping, parking, boat launching, fishing, and portaging) could continue, no enhanced access would be permitted.

However, if the access point is considered to be a significant staging area with camping, vehicle parking and boat launching being appropriate and important activities, then this site can be designated as an access

zone. In addition, if it was decided this site should be improved to provide enhanced access and camping facilities, then it could be designated as a development zone. Such a site could then potentially accommodate a small campground, washrooms, and better boat launching facilities.

Thus, it is important to consider what various zoning alternatives could be proposed within the protected areas of the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site. One option is that the vast majority of the site could be zoned natural environment, with some small additional areas being designated as access zones or staging areas. In some places, there are significant natural and cultural heritage resources that need to be protected by special management guidelines. These become distinct from adjacent zones by identifying them as nature reserve and historical zones to identify their special and different protection requirements. Wilderness zoning may be considered in the most remote sectors of the site in areas that are now road free and remote.

**You can provide input to future zoning for the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site.**

Details on zoning alternatives are outlined below and appear in Figures 3 and 4. You should think of zoning options as they might affect the use of the site, and consider a variety of combinations. The objective is to determine a zoning mix for all parts of the site that will provide the necessary protection to the natural and cultural values while balancing the recreational interests of those concerned with the site.

In some locations, there may be several different alternatives for the same geography, such as in Option 1 where natural environment or nature reserve or wilderness zones are shown. In such a case, one type should be selected to allow the mix of uses that may be preferred for that location. Please provide us with a rationale for the alternatives you select. See also the sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.6, which describe in detail the various zoning alternatives.

### 5.1.1 Natural Environment (NE) Zones

Option 1: 40,909 ha. (includes NE-1, NE-2, NE-3 as outlined below)
Option 2: 46,078 ha. (includes the three NE zones in Option 1 plus the northeast quadrant of Algoma Headwaters Provincial Park.

The majority of the site could be designated as natural environment zones as shown in Zoning Option 1 (Figure 3). Depending on management guidelines, the natural environment classification would generally permit all existing uses in the protected areas to continue. Ranger North would continue to be managed as a conservation reserve under the *Public Lands Act.*

Development in natural environment zones is limited to back country or wilderness campsites, portages, trails, signs necessary to identify routes, minimal interpretive facilities, and other simple facilities that

support low-intensity recreational use. Hunting, trapping, bear management areas (BMAs) and travel on existing authorized roads would continue.

Zoning Option 1:

Three natural environment zones could be designated based on geographic and management similarities as shown in Zoning Option 1 - Figure 3. The natural environment zones in Zoning Option 1 are as follows:

NE-1: Headwaters East (32,022 ha) - somewhat remote area with minimal road access
NE-2: Goulais River (4,066 ha) - waterway park
NE-3: Aubinadong-Nushatogaini Rivers (4,821 ha) - waterway park

OR

Zoning Option 2:

Three natural environment zones could be designated based on geographic and management similarities. The options for these proposed natural environment zones appear in Zoning Option 2 - Figure 4. The natural environment zones delineated in Zoning Option 2 are as follows:

NE-1: Headwaters (40,022 ha) - somewhat remote, with minimal road access which includes the north east quadrant of Algoma Headwaters Provincial Park.
NE-2: Goulais River (4,066 ha) - waterway park
NE-3: Aubinadong-Nushatogaini Rivers (4,821 ha) - waterway park

Variations to this boundary (additions and/or deletions), as well as possible additions appropriate for natural environment zone designations may be considered.

5.1.2 Conservation Reserve

Zoning Option: Ranger North Conservation Reserve (7,032 ha)

The conservation reserve will not be zoned, as a specific zoning policy is not provided for under the *Public Lands Act*. The Ranger North Conservation Reserve will continue to be administered according to the existing legislation and policy for conservation reserves.

Enhanced protection of significant values may be considered in the future, if there are significant demonstrated conflicts as a result of specific land uses. In situations and/or locations where existing or new land uses may conflict with the protection of significant values, a "test of compatibility" will be conducted.

Development in conservation reserves is limited to back country/wilderness campsites, portages, trails, signs necessary to identify trails/routes, minimal interpretive facilities and other simple facilities that support low-intensity recreational use. Hunting, trapping, BMAs and travel on existing authorized roads will continue.

### 5.1.3 Access (A) and Development (D) Zones

**Zoning Option 1:** Moderate Access and Development (23 ha)

Moderate Access: Most existing access locations would be retained except those where conflicts presently occur or there are unwanted impacts (Zoning Option 1, Figure 3).

**Zoning Option 2:** Enhanced Access and Development (26 ha)

Enhanced Access: Includes those locations with moderate access, but with some additions/variations. Access zones could be located at any or all of the existing access locations as shown in zoning option 2, Figure 4. Alternatively, as shown in Option 1, access could be more limited which would increase the remote nature of the site. However, you must consider access to the site boundary as well as access to waterways within the site when making your choices.

Access Zones: Access zones serve as staging areas where minimum support facilities enable controlled entry to and use of the site. The two options for the designation of access zones provide for a variety of access points to and within the site. The infrastructure and use in access zones is limited to roads, visitor control structures, basic day-use facilities, small car campgrounds, basic commercial services including outfitting for back-country users and orientation, interpretive, education, research and management facilities. The options outlined are considered different levels of access for the site. Options for access zones may include but are not limited to the following.

Option 1: Moderate Access (23 ha)

- A-1 Dyson Lake (2 ha)
- A-2 Quinn Lake (2 ha)
- A-3 Point Lake (3 ha)
- A-4 Tepee Lake (2 ha)
- A-5 Hound Lake (2 ha)
- A-6 Gong Lake (2 ha)
- A-7 Saymo Lake (3 ha)
- **A-8 Ragged Lake (5 ha)
- **A-9 Friendly Lake (2 ha)

**These two zones (A-8: Ragged Lake and A-9: Friendly Lake) are proposed in Zoning Option 1 as potential access zones.
"Hike-in" access could be considered in the vicinity of Moon Lake and Simms Lake as well as at Eileen Lake and Coppens Lake.

Option 2: Enhanced Access and Development Zoning (59ha)

- A-1 Dyson Lake (2 ha)
- A-2 Quinn Lake (2 ha)
- A-3 Point Lake (3 ha)
- A-4 Tepee Lake (2 ha)
- A-5 Hound Lake (2 ha)
- A-6 Gong Lake (2 ha)
- A-7 Saymo Lake (3 ha)
- A-10 Torrance Lake (2 ha)
- A-11 Whitman Dam Falls (8 ha)

Note that within option 2, A-8 and A-9 become development zones: A-8 Ragged Lake becomes D-1 (25 ha)

and A-9 Friendly Lake becomes D-2 (8 ha)
Areas located outside the site that may offer unplanned access to the site include: Spook Lake, Grey Owl Road, Beckett Township Road, and McNie Township Road.

Development Zones: Two potential development zones may be considered in the options, as mentioned above, as alternates to access zones:

D –1: Ragged Lake Development Zone (25 ha)

This is the site of a former MNR work camp that has been closed and recently rehabilitated. Ragged Lake D-1 could accommodate an Ontario Parks visitor control and administrative/work centre as well as a small, car-campground (up to 50 campsites) and/or other associated recreation facilities. Alternate accommodation such as yurts could also be considered within the Ragged Lake camping area.

D – 2: Friendly Lake Development Zone (8 ha)

There is an established camping area at Friendly Lake that could accommodate up to 10 campsites. If moderate access as proposed in Option 1 is selected, Friendly Lake may only be an access zone.

Other sites may also be considered as development zones based on public consultation.

Areas designated as development zones typically contain such facilities as visitor control structures, day-use infrastructure, car-campgrounds, administrative offices, basic commercial services, as well as orientation, interpretive, educational, research and management activities.

### 5.1.4 Nature Reserve (NR) Zones

Zoning Option 1: 1,539 ha (includes three NR Zone options (NR-1, NR-2, NR-3)
Zoning Option 2: 956 ha (contains NR-2 andNR-3)

The alternatives for designation of nature reserve zones appear in all options where emphasis is suggested on distinct zones to protect natural settings. Some areas within the site are important habitat for significant plants and animals (species at risk). Many of these species are at the limit of their range. Therefore, those species' habitats may be zoned nature reserve. There are three proposed nature reserve zones outlined below. Based on public consultation, other options may be considered.

Given the significance and sensitivity of natural features contained in a proposed nature reserve zone, different management principles would apply within each zone. Motorized travel and hunting are not permitted within nature reserve zones. Any development within nature reserve zones is limited to day use and non-mechanized trails, necessary signs related to natural heritage education and backcountry travel, and temporary facilities for research and management.

Sites being considered for designation as nature reserves are:

NR – 1 - Gord Lake Old Growth (583 ha) -The old growth white pine stands located just west of Gord Lake are among the oldest and best examples of old growth white pine in the signature site area and possibly in Ontario. Some of these white pines are up to 15 stories high and 350 years old.

NR – 2 - Butter Tin Lake (73 ha) - Butter Tin Lake is entirely surrounded by an extensive quaking bog. This bog has numerous significant wetland plants worth protecting, including pitcher plants and many varieties of orchids (e.g. calopogon, rose pogonia and nodding and hooded ladies tresses).

NR – 3 - Goulais River (883 ha) – The southern 12 km of the Goulais River Provincial Park contains habitat for a species at risk. The last two km of this waterway park (just north of Searchmont) contain the Searchmont Delta Natural Heritage Area, an Ice Age delta which was created at the outlet of a massive channel of glacial meltwater.

### 5.1.5 Wilderness (W) Zones

Zoning Option 1: 8,000 ha - includes only the wilderness zone in the Gord Lake – Firetrail Lake areas.

Zoning Option 2: No wilderness zone

Part of the character of the site is its wilderness setting and remote quality. To many backcountry travelers, a wilderness area consists of no roads or development, as well as few people frequenting the area. Protected areas can be managed for the enhancement of wilderness experiences through the designation of wilderness zones.

Is it appropriate to designate any formal wilderness zones within Algoma Headwaters Signature Site? Development in a wilderness zone would be limited to rustic campsites, portages, trails and signs necessary for trail/route identification.

If such wilderness zones were to be designated within the parks associated with Algoma Headwaters Signature Site, certain restrictions would apply. There is no mechanized travel permitted in wilderness zones, including ATV, motorboat, and snowmobiles except for those existing authorized uses. Aircraft landings could also be restricted here. If wilderness zones are not designated, then the alternative is to have these areas designated as natural environment zones.

Hunting would be permitted within designated wilderness zones. Campsites in wilderness zones are limited to minimal facilities such as designated fireplaces and backcountry privies. However, the option to establish temporary, all-season, roofed accommodations (e.g., yurts and/or rustic cabins) may be considered. These could provide opportunities for "boat-in" or "canoe-in" use, "hut-to-hut" hiking or cross-country skiing.

W-1: Gord Lake – Firetrail Lake Wilderness (W) Zone (8,000 ha) - This designation would protect the most remote northeast portion of the site (within Algoma Headwaters Provincial Park). It has wilderness characteristics, and would be managed to maintain its remote quality. There would be no mechanized travel.

Variations in wilderness zone boundaries as well as additional locations may also be considered.

### 5.1.6 Historical (H) Zones

Significant archaeological and historical resources that require special protection and management could be designated as historical zones. The priority for historical zones is protection, heritage appreciation and research. Subject to the management guidelines that will be prepared for each historical zone, only minimal interpretive, research and management facilities may be provided. Permitted uses would include only those required for visitor exploration and scientific research. Development is limited to trails, necessary signs, as well as interpretive, educational, research and management facilities. Portages and signs necessary for backcountry/wilderness travel would also be permitted.

The following two locations are alternatives being considered as historic zones:

**H-1: North Island in Megisan Lake** (3 ha) – Archaeological interpretation suggests this was a multi-family campsite where Aboriginal peoples congregated in summer before moving inland in winter to hunt and trap.

H-2: Northeast Shore of Megisan Lake (5 ha) – This site has culturally modified trees and other archaeological evidence that suggests that Aboriginal peoples used this location for building canoes and other hand-crafted items. Further archaeological inventory, or public input, may offer additional information as to whether these and other locations are appropriate for inclusion as historical zones.

## 6.0 Management Policies

Some aspects of planning and management for the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site are governed by existing policies:

- Ontario Provincial Parks Planning and Management Policies (1992);
- *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (1999) and additional policy clarification statements;
- The Crown Land Use Atlas
- Conservation Reserve Policy

and other related directives.

A Statement of Conservation Interest was prepared to guide the management of the Ranger North Conservation Reserve and an Interim Management Statement provides direction for the provincial parks until a signature site strategy is approved.

The following summarizes planning and management actions that are governed by either legislation or policy, and are therefore not under consideration as management options.

### 6.1 Aboriginal or Treaty Rights

The Algoma Headwaters contains traditional Aboriginal travel routes and areas for hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering. Traditional resources used by Aboriginal peoples with Treaty and Constitutional Rights for subsistence and ceremonial purposes may occur in the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site. Such activities will continue with consideration for public safety and conservation objectives.

Continuing consultation with Aboriginal people who have Aboriginal or Treaty Rights in the signature site will be an integral part of the planning process. Measures for long-term protection (such as zoning) of sacred Aboriginal sites and traditions will be a priority throughout the planning process. First Nations and Aboriginal communities' review of this document may assist in identifying sacred Aboriginal sites and traditions that should be addressed in the strategy.

### 6.2 Cultural Resource Protection

The management of cultural resources will be directed towards protection and heritage appreciation. Protecting cultural resources will be a high priority and will be addressed through zoning, legislation and public education.

### 6.3 Access / Mechanized Travel

Under *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, the use of existing authorized trails will be permitted to continue. Use of snowmobiles and ATVs within Algoma Headwaters Signature Site is only permitted on existing authorized trails. Hiking trails (for non-mechanized travel) on remote tourism lakes will be permitted to continue. Dependant on public consultation, restrictions on mechanized travel and/or horsepower restrictions may be implemented in more remote areas of the signature site. If wilderness zones are designated within Algoma Headwaters, no mechanized travel will be permitted within those zones.

### 6.4 Heritage Education

Through appropriate management of the site's natural and cultural heritage and recreation activities, visitors can learn about these resources. Information could be located at access points and include details about the extent of the Algoma Headwaters area, its facilities and services. In addition, there could be opportunities to learn about the features within the protected areas using such things as maps or interpretive displays and programs.

## 6.5 Adjacent Land Use Management

Decisions about the use of lands adjacent to the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site will be based on existing legislation, strategic direction and policy, such as the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act*, the Forest Accord, Crown Land Use Atlas, and Forest Management Plans.

Adjacent landowners, First Nations, Crown land users and other stakeholders are encouraged to identify their interests during this planning process.

The existing electrical transmission corridor will continue. Discussions with the energy company about management requirements (such as access, or control of underbrush and other vegetation along the corridor) will establish the best methods for dealing with these within the site while adhering to the approved guidelines for protecting the resource.

## 6.6 Hunting and Trapping

*The Ontario Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, directs that hunting will continue within the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site, subject to full public consultation and review of zoning and management options, sustainable wildlife management practices, and applicable Ontario hunting regulations. As previously stated, subject to full consultation, if nature reserve zones are designated in the final approved strategy, hunting, including bear management services, will not be allowed within these zones.

Commercial fur harvesting will be permitted to continue. New operations, including trap line cabins and trails, will not be permitted. The relocation of existing trails and cabins will be subject to ecological principles and the management planning process.

## 6.7 Fisheries Management

Algoma Headwaters Signature Site will be managed to sustain healthy populations of existing fisheries (brook trout, lake trout and walleye).

Sport fishing will continue in the site. Ontario Fishing Regulations continue to apply, including baitfish restrictions and special seasons in the following lakes, where there are special catch and possession limits:

- Gong Lake (in Handleman and McIlveen Townships) a trophy lake trout lake, with slot sizes, lower limits and a shortened season.

- Lakes within Way-White, Schembri, Wlasy, Scriven and Bracci Townships are designated under the Ontario Fishery Regulations as high quality fishing lakes. Live baitfish is not permitted in these lakes, lake trout catch and possession limits are reduced, and special sanctuary status applies (i.e., shortened season).

Fly-fishing is the only method of angling permitted within the small

section of the East Goulais River that is within the boundaries of Goulais River Provincial Park.

Commercial fishing is not permitted within the signature site.

Commercial bait harvesting will be permitted to continue in the signature site, except in nature reserve (NR) zones subject to management guidelines. No new bait harvesting will be permitted.

Non-native fish species introductions are not permitted.

Live baitfish will continue to be placed under existing restrictions to reduce the risk of accidental introductions.

Fish sanctuaries may be created on some lakes within the signature site during this planning process.

Fish stocking: The designation of a "put and take" fishery (fish stocking), as well as other management options, may be considered during this planning process. This will depend on lake surveys and information gathered in fisheries management planning.

### 6.8 Forest Operations

Forest harvesting and renewal activities are not permitted within the signature site. Existing authorized forest access roads within and adjacent to the signature site will continue to be used as directed in forest management planning. Forest operations adjacent to the site, will be managed by the Sault Ste. Marie and Chapleau districts' forest management planning processes. Forest management plans, which involve both signature site planning and the review of annual forest industry work schedules, will have regard for the protected areas and the necessary forest management practices required to sustain the site. No new forest access roads will be permitted into or within the signature site.

### 6.9 Mining Claims / Mineral Exploration

Mineral exploration and mining are not permitted within Algoma Headwaters Signature Site. However, *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* and related direction state that individuals who have been authorized to explore for minerals, develop or operate mines, may have access to pass through the site to reach existing forest reserves and mining patents not included within the signature site boundary. This access will comply with the *Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Mining Act*.

Forest reserves have been identified that are adjacent to the site and contain natural heritage and special areas that could complement the parks within the site. The intention is to add these lands to the park portion of the site if a claim or lease expires through normal processes.

## 6.10 Fire Management

MNR and Ontario Parks recognize fire as an essential ecosystem process, fundamental to restoring and maintaining the ecological integrity of protected areas in the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence and Boreal Forest Regions.

As part of implementation planning following the preparation of the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site Strategy, fire management planning will be undertaken in cooperation with MNR's fire program to determine approaches to fire management. This plan will identify management objectives, protection priorities, the potential use of prescribed fire and/or prescribed burning, and fire response activities. The plan will advance the use of fire to meet ecosystem management objectives while ensuring the appropriate response to forest fires to prevent personal injury, value loss, and social disruption. The plan will examine the historical role of fire in the ecodistrict, and its potential beneficial effects, particularly with regard to forest succession and the rejuvenation of white pine.

Before an approved fire management plan is in place, fire management will be carried out as directed by the Forest Fire Management Strategy for Ontario. Fires that threaten park visitor safety or park infrastructure will receive full response and sustained action until extinguished. Other fires can be considered for modified response, via consultation between the Park Superintendent and the Fire Management Supervisor / Duty Officer. 'Light on the land' fire suppression techniques, which do not unduly disturb the landscape, will be used when protecting sensitive features wherever feasible. Examples of 'light on the land' techniques may include limiting the use of heavy equipment and foam, and limiting the number of trees felled during fire response efforts. Prescribed burning may be used, in accordance with MNR policy and guidelines, to achieve ecosystem management or hazard reduction objectives.

## 6.11 Partnerships

MNR encourages the building of partnerships for the mutual benefit of all interests including the site's natural resources. During the implementation phase, once an approved strategy is in place, partnerships will be encouraged for projects relating to development, operations, research, and marketing of the Algoma Headwaters Signature Site.

## 7.0 Summary

The foregoing outlines some potential options and alternatives for the management of Algoma Headwaters Signature Site. Information from this document and input received through public comments will be analyzed and considered in the next stage of the planning process.

Based on the analysis of public comment, a preliminary strategy will be prepared for the site. The next stage of public consultation will provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the preliminary strategy.

Your comments, participation and knowledge are important to ensure the best possible signature site strategy is developed. Please provide us with your ideas about the management options presented in this document on the attached comment sheet.

Figure 1: Regional Context

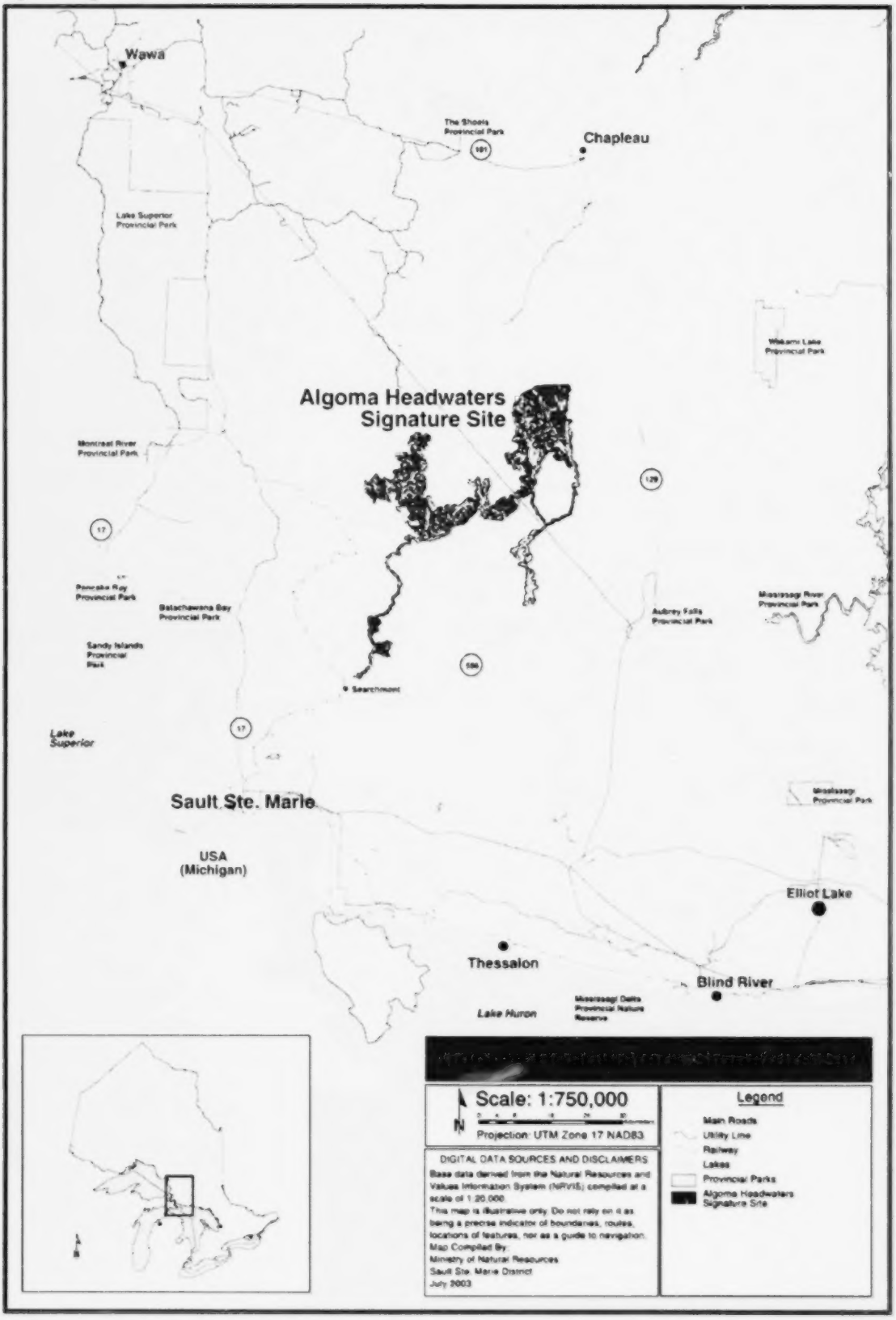


Figure 1: Regional Context

**Figure 2: Protected Area Designations : Algoma Headwater Signature Site**

Algoma Headwaters Provincial Park
Aubinadong-Nushatogami Rivers Provincial Park
Ranger North Conservation Reserve
Goulais River Provincial Park
Searchmont
Ranger North Rd. (West Branch)
Ranger North Rd. (East Branch)
Nushatogami River
Aubinadong River
Hwy. 129
Legend
Railway
Utility Line
Roads
Streams
Townships
Lakes
Natural Environment Class Park
Waterway Class Parks
Conservation Reserve
Signature Site
Projection: UTM Zone 17 NAD83
Base data derived from the Natural Resources and Values Information System (NRVIS) compiled at a scale of 1:20,000.
This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of boundaries, routes, locations of features, nor as a guide to navigation.
Map Compiled By:
Ministry of Natural Resources
Sault Ste. Marie District
July 2003

Figure 3: Zoning Options # 1

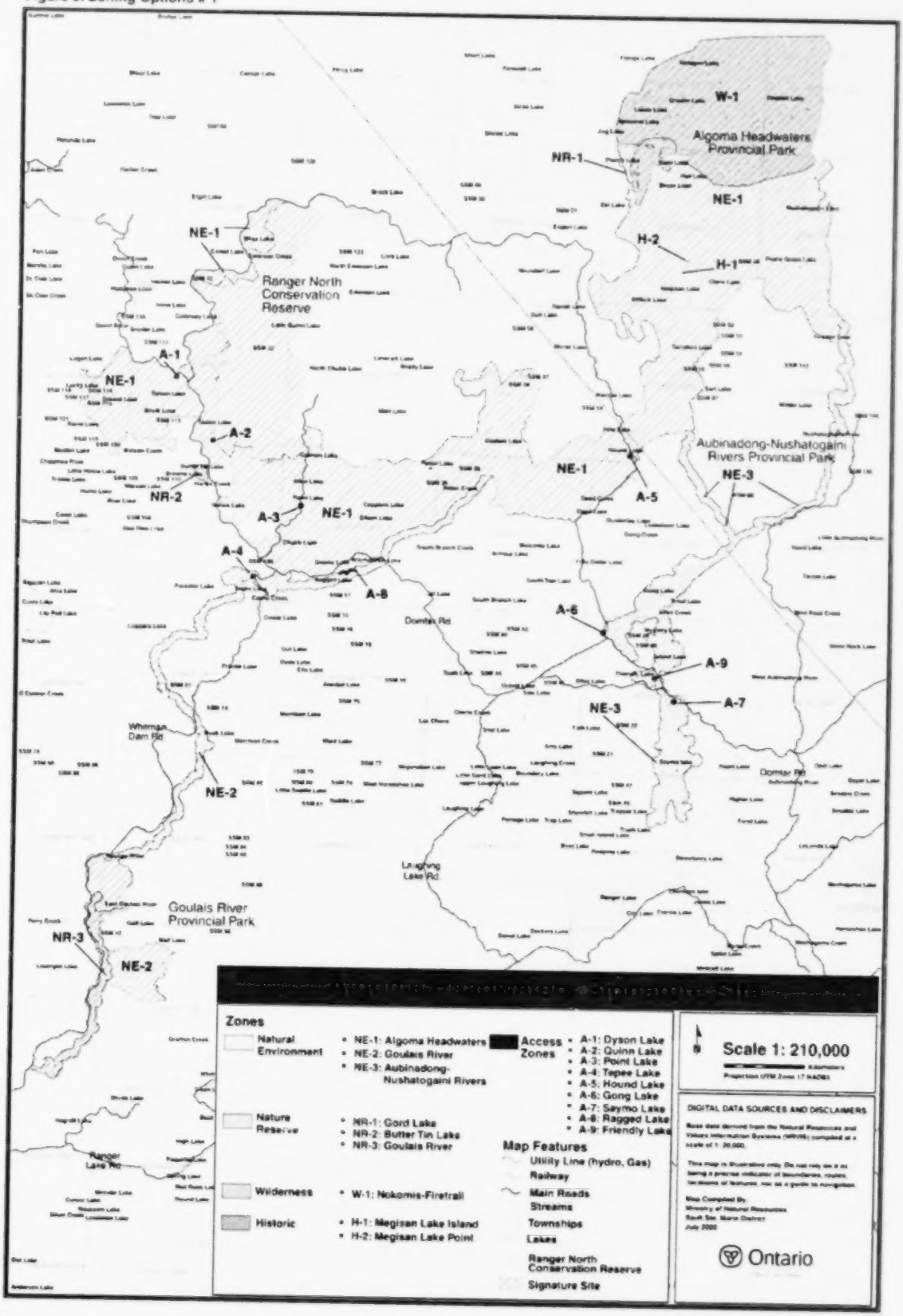
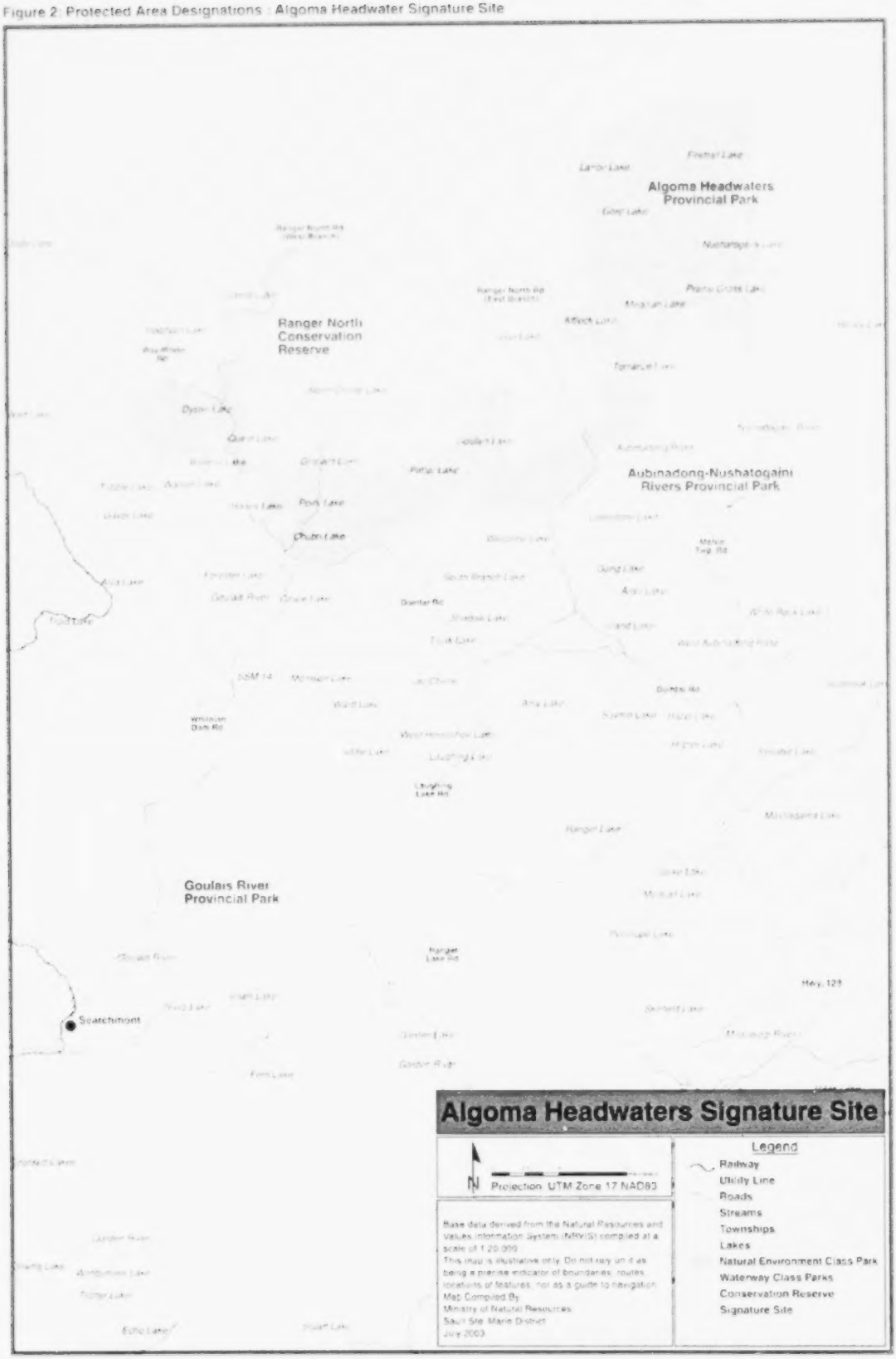


Figure 2: Protected Area Designations : Algoma Headwater Signature Site


Algoma Headwaters Provincial Park
Ranger North Conservation Reserve
Aubinadong-Nushatogaini Rivers Provincial Park
Goulais River Provincial Park
Searchmont
Algoma Headwaters Signature Site
Legend
Railway
Utility Line
Roads
Streams
Townships
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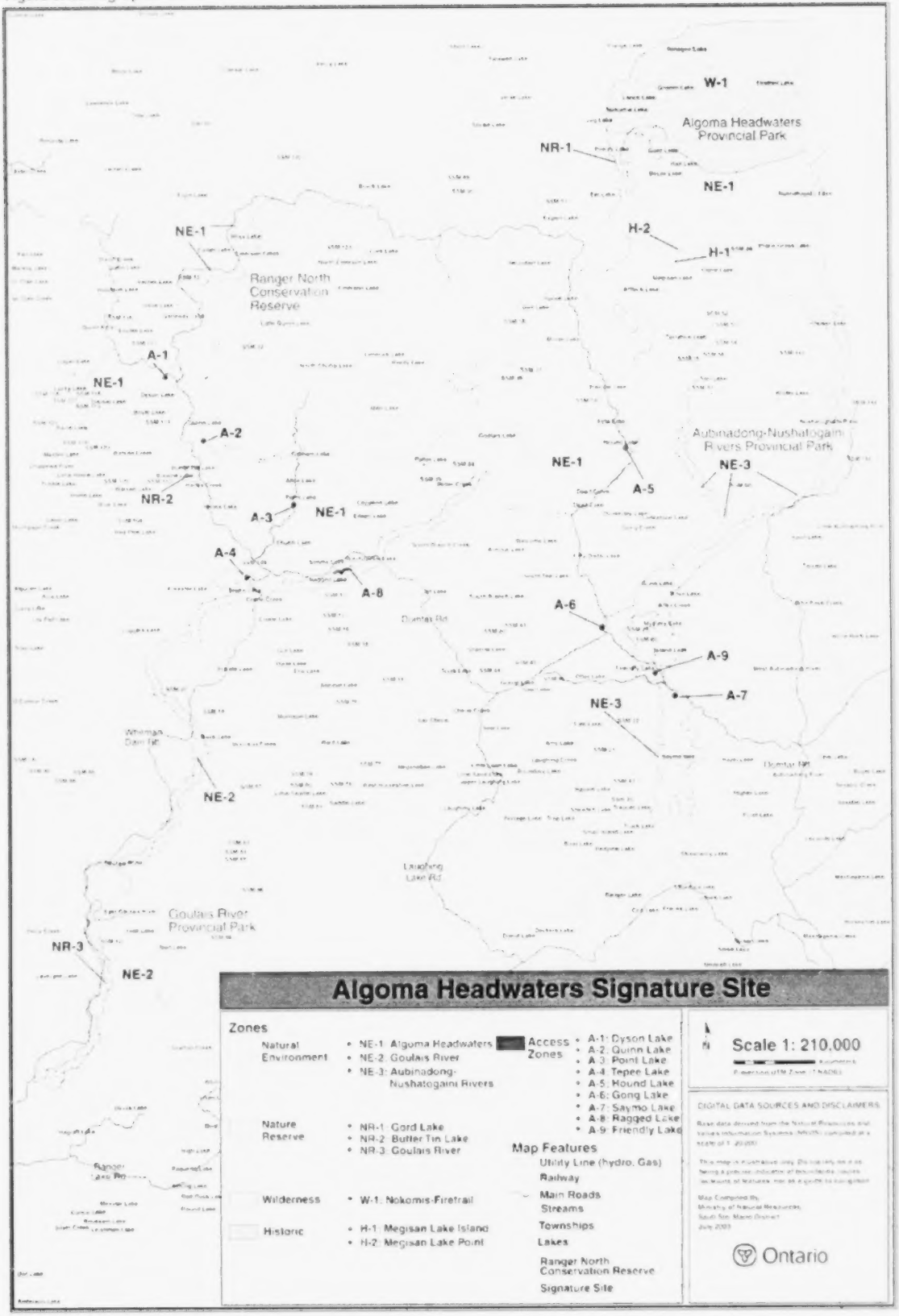
W-1
Algoma Headwaters Provincial Park
NR-1
NE-1
NE-1
H-2
H-1
Ranger North Conservation Reserve
A-1
NE-1
A-2
NR-2
A-3
NE-1
A-4
A-8
Dunlop Rd
NE-1
A-5
Aubinadong-Nushatogaini Rivers Provincial Park
NE-3
A-6
A-9
A-7
NE-3
NE-2
Goulais River Provincial Park
NR-3
NE-2
Algoma Headwaters Signature Site
Zones
Natural Environment
NE-1: Algoma Headwaters
NE-2: Goulais River
NE-3: Aubinadong-Nushatogaini Rivers
Access Zones
A-1: Dyson Lake
A-2: Quinn Lake
A-3: Point Lake
A-4: Tepee Lake
A-5: Hound Lake
A-6: Gong Lake
A-7: Saymo Lake
A-8: Ragged Lake
A-9: Friendly Lake
Nature Reserve
NR-1: Gord Lake
NR-2: Butler Tin Lake
NR-3: Goulais River
Wilderness
W-1: Nokomis-Firetrail
Historic
H-1: Megisan Lake Island
H-2: Megisan Lake Point
Map Features
Utility Line (hydro, Gas)
Railway
Main Roads
Streams
Townships
Lakes
Ranger North Conservation Reserve
Signature Site
Scale 1: 210,000
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Figure 4: Zoning Options # 2